



October 30, 2002

## **Mayor O'Malley announces reductions in Childhood Lead Poisoning** *CUSP--Dupont/US Conference of Mayors' grant facilitates more progress*

Two years ago, Mayor Martin O'Malley announced a multifaceted approach to resolving the lead poisoning dilemma facing the City of Baltimore. Now, encouraging results indicate the administration's campaign to eliminate childhood lead poisoning in the City is reaping dramatic dividends. The number of children being tested for lead poisoning rose sharply, while the number of children testing positive for lead poisoning went down.

At a midday press conference today, accompanied by J. Thomas Cochran, Executive Director of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, City Health Commissioner Dr. Peter Beilenson, State legislative representatives and community advocates, Mayor O'Malley announced dramatic reductions in childhood lead poisoning over the last two years. The Mayor also announced a \$200,000 grant awarded to the City through Cities United for Science Progress (CUSP), a partnership of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and DuPont Inc.

Since making lead poisoning prevention a top administrative priority of the fiscal Year 2000 legislative agenda, the City has secured approximately \$12 million in State funding to support the its prevention efforts. "We fought hard to obtain the funding necessary to give our children a fighting chance against lead poisoning and the numbers show that our work is paying off," said Mayor O'Malley. "Through increased interagency coordination, strengthened enforcement of lead paint violations and a proactive prevention plan, we are making serious in-roads."

According to numbers reported by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), 49,266 Baltimore children were tested from January 1, 1999 through July 31, 2002. MDE data also shows that the number of children with elevated blood lead levels over 20, dropped by 45.8 % from FY 2000 through FY 2002.

The City's commitment to identifying children in danger of being poisoned by lead was given a welcome boost via the \$200,000 award it received from Cities United for Science Progress (CUSP), through the "Lead Safe...for Kid's Sake" grant program. The program recognizes mayors currently implementing effective solutions to make city neighborhoods lead-safe. Baltimore received the largest portion of the total \$500,000 program funds, divided among four cities.

"Mayor O'Malley's leadership in Baltimore has made a real difference in reducing lead poisoning and improving the health of all residents," said J. Thomas Cochran. "This competitive award demonstrates that he has made Baltimore a model for all U.S. cities on lead safety issues." "Lead poisoning is a preventable disease," said Del. Sandy Rosenberg, the General Assembly's leading advocate on this issue. "What the City and State have done over the last four years and what DuPont and the US Conference of Mayors are doing today will prevent hundreds of children from becoming lead poisoned."

The City will use its portion to purchase do-it-yourself home lead-dust test kits, which will be offered to every pregnant woman in Baltimore at her first prenatal clinic visit. These lead-dust test kits will allow pregnant women to perform a simple procedure to determine if their household is contaminated with lead paint hazards.

According to Dr. Beilenson, "I can't thank DuPont and the U.S. Conference of Mayors enough for joining the fight against lead poisoning and giving the unborn children in Baltimore City the opportunity to live an lead-free life in a lead-safe home."

For more information on the Mayor's Lead Initiative, contact Joanne Yeager Dull at 410-396-3765.